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Christian Sufferers:  
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O R,  
SEASONABLE ADVICE  
T O  
Protestant Dissenters,  
Relating to their  
B E H A V I O U R,  
Under their present  
DISAPPOINTMENT.

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*A Sermon preach'd in the Country,*  
*January 28. 1732-3.*

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L O N D O N,

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CHURCH OF ENGLAND

SEASON FOR SERVICE  
TO

PROTESTANT DISSENT

OF THE



DISSENT

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

LONDON

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1 PET. 4. 12—19.

*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you :*

*But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

*If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you : on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other mens matters.*

*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*



*For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

*And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

*Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.*

**T**O be freed from chains and fetters; to have all odious and dishonourable marks of distinction taken off; to be restored to our birth-privileges, and to our natural and civil rights, and be set on an equal foot with our fellow-subjects; to be in a capacity to serve one's native country, in the interest of religion, without any clogs or snares to our consciences, when the wisdom of our governors shall see fit to call us to such difficult, tho' honourable, services, is, most certainly, very desirable: and no one, of common ingenuity, can blame those that have long suffer'd under such incapacities, and badges of dishonour, for moving for a redress of their grievances;



grievances; provided it be done with decency, and in a proper season: especially when it is also consider'd, that the interest of religion, and a reformation of manners, and the honour of the great Redeemer, are so much concern'd in the business.

But after this has been done, as far as the prudence of many wise men has judg'd it, at this time, proper; and yet without the desired effect, and we are still left to suffer under the complain'd of hardships, what is our duty? what is incumbent on christian sufferers, who profess a nearness and a conformity to Jesus, and to have all their hopes and desires carried out to the things of another life and world? here we need not be at a loss. The gospel is full of suitable and proper directions, and contains most excellent instructions how to behave in so difficult a juncture: but none, that I can at present think of, more seasonable than what are offer'd us in this text.

This great apostle, being converted and recovered from his fall, was desirous, according to the command of his Lord, \* *to strengthen his brethren*, and therefore wrote from *Babylon in Egypt*, to the christian converts of that day, scatter'd abroad thro' many countries, and living as strangers amongst heathens who reproached and persecuted them, to encourage

\* Luke 22. 32.

and comfort them under their sufferings, and to exhort them to constancy and a behaviour suitable to their profession. And amongst all the exhortations of this kind contained in this epistle, I find none more full, more pathetick, or more forceable, than these I have now read to you.

Some of the same things he had spoken before in the preceding chapter, saying, \* *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But, and if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil-doing.* But here, in the text, he is more large in his exhortations, and useth a greater variety, and a greater force in the arguments, with which he presseth them. And,

1. He begins with an affectionate and most endearing compellation, expressive of the highest esteem of them, and the most tender

\* Ver. 13—17.

regard for their welfare; *Beloved*: a title more frequent in addressing, and better understood amongst Christians in those earlier and better days of simplicity, and pure christianity, than in our days of ceremony and compliment; and carrying in it the great share they were believed to have in the love of their maker \*, as well as the high place they held in the speaker's heart.

2. He puts them in mind of their present afflicted condition, not with a design to enflame their passions, or stir them up to resentments, but to excite them to make a right, *i. e.* a religious use of their sharp and severe trials, which they suffered for Jesus's sake. And therefore,

3. He pathetically exhorts them to a christian and becoming carriage, under their present difficulties and trials. *As, not to think strange at any sufferings, that might be brought upon them by the ill-will of their enemies. But, to rejoice in them. To take heed that they gave no just occasion to their adversaries, to punish them as evil-doers and busy-bodies. Not to be ashamed of suffering for the sake of Christ, but rather to glorify God on that behalf. And, in all their sufferings to commit themselves to the Almighty's care: And then,*

\* See Rom. 1. 7. and 2 Thess. 2. 13.



4. He excites them to such a behaviour, by a variety of strong and persuasive arguments, drawn from their condition in life ; their relation to Jesus ; their concern for his honour ; their own peace and happiness ; and the faithfulness of that God to whose care they had committed themselves.

But I design, by God's leave and help, to speak to these words in a practical applicatory way ; in an address to you as Christians and Protestant Dissenters. And may the divine Spirit of light and truth so enlighten and assist, both me and you, that God may be glorified, and we reap saving and eternal benefit to our souls.

My brethren, as I have great reason to hope concerning many of you, that you are beloved of God ; so I can assure you, that you have a considerable place in my heart, and my soul's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved. And in order to help forward this salvation, I purpose at this time,

To set before you some of those trials, reproaches and sufferings, that are likely to come upon you for your strict adherence to the cause and interest of Jesus :

To acquaint you with the behaviour that is incumbent on you, and expected from you, in such difficult and trying circumstances.

And then to excite you to such a becoming deportment, by the most forceable and persuasive

suasive arguments. And in doing these things, I would keep within the bounds which this text prescribes to us.

I. As you are men, as you are Christians, but especially as you are Protestant Dissenters, professing an hearty concern for the honour of your Lord, for the purity of his institutions, and the simplicity of his worship, you must expect to meet with reproaches, sufferings and trials for Jesus's sake.

What was here wrote by an inspired apostle to the Christians of that day, was design'd by God to be instructive and useful to good men, the sincere worshipers of Jesus, in all the future ages of the church; and may with propriety be applied to those, whose character it is, that they are strangers and sojourners here, and are not of the world, nor conformed to it; but having embraced the faith of Christ make an open and honourable profession of it, and endeavour in their lives to adorn it, keeping close to that pure worship of his which he has instituted, without the impure mixtures of men's devising. For persons of this character can scarcely fail of meeting with censures, reproaches, and many other trials from a world that lieth in wickedness, that hateth Jesus himself, and therefore is not likely to be more favourable to his strictest followers.

Thus the blessed son of God told his disciples whilst present with them, \* *because ye are not of the world—therefore the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than the lord. And, if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And again, † in the world ye shall have tribulation.*

And the apostles of our Lord constantly preached the same doctrine. St. Paul told the christians wherever he came, ‡ *that they must thro' much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And || that all that would live godly in Christ Jesus, should suffer persecution.*

And our apostle tells these christians \*\*, *that if they refused to run with others into the same excess of riot, they would be reproached for it. And then in the text speaks †† of a fiery trial which was to try them; of being reproached for the name of Christ; and of suffering as christians and according to the will of God.*

And are not good men, the faithful followers of Jesus, liable to the same trials in every age? How justly then may you look for them? If by †† *the fiery trial*, we do not understand, strictly, a trial by fire, but, according to most interpreters, any sharp, severe and painful trial; there is nothing spoken here that is uncommon, or may not be

\* John 15. 19, 20.    † Ver. 16, 33.    ‡ Acts 14. 22.  
 || 2 Tim. 3. 12.    \*\* Ver. 4.    †† Ver. 12, 14, 16, 19.  
 †† πύρωσις.



expected by all those that love Jesus, and desire a conformity to him.

You see then that the christian religion is not the way to worldly honour and greatness. What the almighty may, in his holy and wise providence, raise some religious persons to, is not the point in question; but what the greatest part of christians have ground to expect. And that is hatred, reproach and persecution. The way to that glorious crown Jesus has promised to his followers, is by the cross, which they must take up and bear after him, whoever hope to arrive at that happy world where he is. His kingdom is not of this world, neither are the honours, privileges or rewards of it, of a worldly nature; but of a spiritual kind, and consistent, and oft interwoven with reproaches and sufferings. Taunts and cruel mockings; invidious marks of infamy; fines and imprisonments, are the honours and privileges you are to look for in this world: if you will be christians, the friends and disciples of the holy and self-denying Jesus; if you will adhere to his despised interest, and keep close to his pure and unadorned worship: your honours and rewards are reserved for the other state. Here you are strangers and pilgrims amongst an inhospitable people that wonder at you. You are seeking another country, but must pass thro' the valley of *Baca* to it; where sorrows must be your

meat, and tears your drink, and repentance your physick, and patience your exercise, and faith your support, and hope your guide, until you arrive at *Immanuel's* land, when all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, and your joy shall be full.

But having given you this brief representation of the sufferings you are to look for, if you would be Christians, I proceed

II. To exhort to a becoming carriage under such difficulties; or to acquaint you what behaviour is incumbent on you, and may be expected from you, in such trying circumstances.

No state of life here is without its temptations. Hath a prosperous state temptations peculiar to it? so hath an afflicted one. And good men wear the same common nature with other men, which by sin is sadly corrupted. And tho divine grace makes a great and happy change in them, yet there are the sad remains of sin in them still, which they will be constantly warring against, while on this side the grave. Therefore lest the friends of Jesus when under oppressions, and suffering unreasonable hardships, should give a loose to their passions, and pursue unlawful methods for their relief, this holy apostle, by the instruction of the Spirit of God, has directed them to a decent and becoming behaviour

viour in such circumstances, a behaviour answerable to their profession, and the just expectations of the Redeemer. As,

1<sup>st</sup>. Not to think strange or be surprized at such kind of treatment \*. I find one interpreter thus translating the words †, Do not alienate yourselves from or forsake the christian faith, because of those fiery trials you may undergo for it. But the most interpret according to our translation, think it not strange if you meet with sharp and severe trials. That is, be often thinking of them, and looking for them before they overtake you: and when they are come, think them not strange or uncommon. Think not that the Almighty visits you in an extraordinary manner, that such kind of sufferings are not the chastenings of a father, nor the common lot of God's people. Be not offended or stumbled at any ill usage you may meet with on account of your christian profession. Suffer not yourselves to be so far ruffled or disturbed in your minds, as to be rendred incapable of acting up to your proper characters. Such a discomposure of spirit would discover a great deal of weakness, and might be a snare.

Let no temptations arising from present trials, ever incline you to lay aside your profession, or make shipwreck of a good con-

\* Ver. 12.

† μὴ ἐσθίετε.



science. But take to yourselves an holy courage, a presence and greatness of mind, that is not easily moved or put into disorder by any accidents. Show you are determined to meet any disappointments, or any sufferings in the way of your duty, and for the sake of your Lord; and that notwithstanding the frowns of the world and the reproaches of men, you are fully resolved to live and dye christians.

2dly. It is incumbent on you not only to expect sufferings, but also \* *to rejoyce in them*. The apostle *James* gives the same advice †, *my brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*. And so does our blessed Lord, saying, ‡ *blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake; rejoyce and be exceeding glad*. So far should you be from murmuring at your sufferings, or from quarrelling with the instruments of them, that you should, on the contrary, receive them with an hearty welcome, and embrace them with joy and pleasure. Show christians that you have no thoughts of flying from sufferings, but are more forward to run and meet them, provided they lie in the way of your duty.

Let those who injuriously oppress you, see that you are so far from being disobliged or

\* Ver. 13.

† Jam. 1. 2.

‡ Mat. 5. 11, 12.

angry,

angry, that you rather esteem their unjust reproaches a kindness really done to you, however intended by them; and that instead of intreating their favour, and begging of them to enlarge your liberties, if it was lawful, you would rather beseech them to continue your chains, and make them stronger and heavier.

This I cannot but think is the proper language of rejoycing in sufferings. And thus did the first christians meet their sufferings. When *Paul* and *Silas* were beaten with many stripes, by the command of the *Philippian* magistrates, and after that cast into prison, and had their feet made fast in the stocks \*, how did they spend the night? in complaining of their wrongs? or in censuring the injustice and the barbarity of the magistrates? No; but in praying and singing praises to God †: How did the believing *Hebrews* take the spoiling of their goods ‡? Did they complain and murmur at the wrong? No, they took the loss with joy.

Let then an easy cheerful behaviour under reproaches and sufferings show that you are neither afraid of them nor impatient under them; that you have learned in every condition, that the wise providence of God shall allot to you, to be content; and that you are well pleased with your promised inheritance, notwithstanding the cross in the way to it.

\* Acts 16. 23.

† Ver. 25.

‡ Heb. 10. 34.

3dly. Another Duty incumbent on christian sufferers is, to take heed that they do not thro' their own crimes, bring sufferings on themselves. \* *Let none of you suffer*, says the text, *as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters*, † as a busy inspector and censor of other mens affairs.

If you who call yourselves christians will practise no other law than that of retaliation; *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*. If, instead of bearing with patience the wrongs that are done unto you, and forgiving the authors of them, you are resolved to resent every affront, and to return railing for railing, wounds for wounds, and reproaches for reproaches. And, if instead of minding your own business, and studying to be quiet, you will needlessly step out of your way, to inspect and censure the conduct of your neighbours, you may raise those confusions as may at last end in rapine and blood-shed, and may bring those penalties and miseries on yourselves, as will be no ways to your honour, and which you will have no cause to rejoice in. You may meet trials enough as you are christians, increase them not by your own faults, lest you thereby lose both the honour and reward of suffering for well-doing.

\* Ver. 15.

† ἀλλοτριεπισκοπή.



It would be great pity, if when men deprive you of your just privileges you should lose your virtue too, your patience, your temper and your charity. The former loss may be your unhappiness; but the latter will be your crime.

Let not then your resentments of the ill usage you have met with from others, hurry you into any measures that may excite them to abridge you yet more in your liberties, and may give them more specious pretences for doing so. Be upon your guard, and walk circumspectly in these evil days, in which many are watching for an occasion to reproach both you and your profession. See that you give them no just occasion, and then will such reproaches be your glory.

*4thly.* When trials and sufferings meet good men in the way of their duty, they ought not to be ashamed of them \*: to suffer as an evil-doer, or a busy-body, is a shame and a just reproach; but to suffer as a christian, is honourable and glorious. Many have forsaken the ways of Jesus thro' shame, but they only discovered the weakness of their faith, and the sandy foundation it was built upon. † *Moses* had better learned Christ, when he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of

\* Ver. 16.

† Heb. 11. 25, 26.

sin, and esteemed reproach for him greater riches than the treasures in *Egypt*. When the apostles were beaten by the command, and in the presence of the Jewish Sanhedrin \*, what did they think of that ignominious usage? Were they ashamed? † No, but they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Jesus. And what opinion had the great St. *Paul* of the cross? He tells the *Galatians* ‡ he gloried in it, because thereby the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. And tells *Timothy* ||, that he was not ashamed of those things which he suffered. And \*\* exhorts him not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of him his prisoner; but to be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel.

He that is ashamed of reproaches and sufferings, ought never to think of being a christian. If therefore you are resolved to be the disciples of Jesus, expect to be distinguish'd by invidious and hateful names. But be not ashamed of them. Wear them as marks of honour, and show that you have learned to go thro' good report and evil report, with indifference, for the sake of your great Lord and patron.

It is the mark of a brave spirit, not to dare to do an evil or base action. But it betrays great weakness of mind, to be ashamed

\* Acts 5. 40.  
ch. 1. 12.

† Ver. 41.  
\*\* Ver. 8.

‡ Ch. 6. 14.

|| 2 Epif.

of that which is virtuous and praise-worthy. Whenever therefore you are unjustly reviled, put on the air of a virtuous boldness, that may show you are conscious of no wilful crimes; and that what they call infamous, you count your glory.

*5thly.* When you suffer reproaches for well-doing, it becomes you to glorify God on this behalf. \* The honour of God is what every pious man is heartily concern'd for; the advancement of it being the great end, both of our creation and redemption. And as there is not any condition in which a man is not capable of glorifying his Maker; so the christian will most earnestly endeavour this in every state; in prosperity and adversity, in honour and dishonour, in liberty and in bondage, in sickness and in health, in all the various turns and changes of life, and in his dying moments.

Have you therefore been disappointed in your expectations of glorifying God in some posts of honour, and useful service? You are called upon to glorify God in another manner, and in a more humble state. Now is there a fair opportunity offered you by divine providence, to show your virtue, your patience, your humility and meekness, to show your self-denial, your mortifiedness to this world, and your charity towards those that

\* Ver. 16.



oppress you; in a word, to show that you are christians. What a great pity would it be, you should let it slip without making these proper advantages of it.

Therefore acknowledge the hand of God in all the hardships and trials you at present lie under, and humbly submit to it. Remember that afflictions spring up not out of the dust \*. Neither are men to be regarded as the sole authors of them. *Shimei* could not have cursed *David* †, nor the Jewish rulers have crucified Jesus ‡, if God had not permitted them.

Bear your sufferings with meekness and patience, not daring to open your mouths in murmurings or complaints either against God or any of his instruments, or in arraigning the equity of his proceedings with you.

But especially glorify God by giving him thanks, that he has called you to suffer for his name's sake, herein putting an honour upon you. Let others climb to the highest pinacles of worldly honour, those dangerous slippery places, do you seek glory, honour and immortality in a patient continuance in well-doing, and glorify your Maker in your present stations, by the exercises of meekness, gentleness, faith and charity, and every other virtue that adorns the christian.

\* Job. 5. 6.

† 2 Sam. 16. 10.

‡ Acts 4. 28.

*6thly.* Another duty recommended to christians under their sufferings is, The committing their souls to God in well-doing \*. Your souls are of great worth, and exposed to many temptations, snares and dangers; and the great adversary is ever seeking their ruin. Therefore the wisest and safest course you can take under these afflictions, the divine providence throws into your lot, is to commit your souls to the Almighty's care, who only can preserve them. To cast off all anxious and disquieting cares, and to cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. Let not sufferings of any kind ever draw you aside from God or your duty, nor be a temptation to you, to practise any unlawful or dishonourable methods to get rid of them, but wait his time for the expected deliverance.

In committing yourselves and your cause to men only, there may be danger and a snare. In committing yourselves to God and his conduct, there can be none; for in the time of trouble, he will hide you in his pavillion †. He will set you upon a rock, and hide you from the strife of the tongues ‡. Therefore let the shadow of the Almighty's wings be your refuge, until these calamities be overpast ||. And then shall he cover you with his feathers, and under his wings may you

\* Ver. 19.    † Ps. 27. 5.    ‡ Ps. 31. 20.    || Ps. 57. 1.

trust: his truth shall be your shield and buckler \*.

In times of the greatest difficulty, distress and danger, it is the duty, the privilege, and the practice of good men to live by faith †. Follow the example: believe that God will bring about your deliverance in the fittest season, that he will serve the most excellent purposes by your restraints, so long as he shall be pleased to continue them, and that he will make these and all other providences work for your good, and help forward your eternal salvation.

But having consider'd the behaviour recommended by an inspired apostle, to christian sufferers. Let us now see,

III. What are the arguments by which he persuades and excites to such a behaviour, to a practice so becoming christians, under all their exercises and trials. And,

1<sup>st</sup>. When you meet with reproaches and sufferings for the sake of Jesus, you have no need to be discouraged, but ought to bear up bravely under them, ‡ because they are no new or strange things, but what have happened to others of God's people, and what you had reason to expect, when you first gave in your names to Jesus.

\* Ps. 91. 4.

† Heb. 10. 38.

‡ Ver. 12.



How soon did the spirit of persecution break in upon the new-made world? The sincere, the pious *Abel*, fell a sacrifice to his cruel haughty brother's rage, only because his works were more righteous, and met with a better acceptance than his own. And the same spirit remained in the succeeding ages, and he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, and it descended down to the days of the holy Jesus, and falsely accused, and evil intreated him, who was the most innocent, generous and beneficent person, that ever lived, and asswaged not its thirst, till it drank deep of his blood. In the first ages of christianity, how did the same spirit reign with cruel tyranny, and display its bloody banner, for above three hundred years? Nor must we expect its empire will cease, till that glorious day of light and liberty take place, when all shall pay honour to the followers of the Lamb, and there shall be no more hurting or destroying in all God's holy mountain.

Seeing then reproaches and sufferings have been the common lot of the people of God in all ages, they should not seem \* strange to you; but † your domesticks and familiars, which you have been looking and waiting for. What! are you christians, and have not learnt to expect trials? Are not all the

\* Ως τα ξένα.

† Ως τα ἰδία, ὡς τα οἰκεῖα.

sons of God chastened by their heavenly Father? Are not chastisements a mark of his love? And are we not expressly told that they are bastards, and not sons whom the Lord chasteneth not \*? This then may serve to reconcile you to sufferings, and teach you to bear them with equanimity and patience, and to rejoice in them, that they are common to all the children of God, to all that will live godly in Christ Jesus.

2dly. You ought to bear reproaches and sufferings with patience, and to rejoice in them, because they are designed for your trial only, and not for your destruction †.

Tho men should design the weakening of you, and the grand adversary your final ruin, by those hardships and difficulties that are thrown upon you; yet God, your best friend, designs only your trial and improvement.

If you are insincere and hypocritical, the sooner you are tried and discovered the better. But if you are sincere and upright, you need fear no trials; but ought rather to rejoice in them, when they overtake you ‡.

The seed that was sown on stony ground, could not bear the trial of the sun's beams, but was soon burnt up; || whilst that which was sown on good ground, and was well rooted, sprung the faster, and brought forth the more

\* Heb. 12. 6, 7, 8.  
|| Math. 13. 5, 6.

† Ver. 12.

‡ Jam. 1. 2.

fruit \*. If you are true christians, the trial of your faith will be more precious than of gold that perisheth, tho it be tried with fire, and shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ †. Pure gold loseth nothing by being tried, but is thereby made the brighter. So the christian loseth nothing, but is improved by all the trials he meets with.

Why then should you complain of any burdens or sufferings, that at present lie upon you? They are only for your trial, and when they have answered the end for which they were sent, and you have made a due improvement of them, and are prepared for greater liberties, your difficulties shall be removed, and your liberties enlarged. And why should you desire them sooner? Would it be for your advantage to have your burdens taken off before you have been humbled under them? You have not been tried enough, are not enough humble under the rod, have not got that good by it, which might have been expected; otherwise, it had been before this removed. Your impatience and angry resentment of the wrongs you suffer, shew that there are corruptions in you still, that need to be purged out, and that an humble state is most certainly the safest and best for you.

\* Ver. 8.

† Ch. i. v. 7. of this Epistle.



3dly. Such a patient submission to reproaches and sufferings, is greatly becoming you as christians, inasmuch as you are thereby partakers of Christ's sufferings \*.

The sufferings that good men meet with for the sake of Christ, may be called the sufferings of Christ, as he suffers in his members, having a sympathy and fellow-feeling with them in all their afflictions and trials, as he told *Saul*, when breathing out threatnings and slaughter against his disciples, and haling them to prison; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me* †? Or,

Good men may be said to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ, when they suffer in like manner as he did, wrongfully, with meekness and patience.

And in which soever of these two senses we take the words, there is great force in them to excite to a proper behaviour under sufferings. Can you desire a greater honour than to bear part of the sufferings of your Lord? Had you accompany'd him when going to Calvary, and had seen him sweating, groaning, and ready to faint under the weight of his cross, Would you not have pitied him and sympathised with him? Would you not have offered to bear it for him; at least to have put your shoulder under the heavier

\* Ver. 13.

† Acts 9. 4.

end of it? What the *Cyrenian* was compelled to do \*, would not you have done freely and cheerfully, and out of love to your Lord? And is he now persecuted and afflicted in his members? And will you grudge to bear part of the suffering, and to put your shoulder to the burden?

Or, when those sufferings overtake you, which you cannot escape without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; is there no force in the example of Jesus, to make you bear your trials with a brave spirit, with patience and fortitude, neither grudging at them, nor sinking under them? This was the high ambition of the great apostle, an ambition worthy of a christian, and what he constantly aspired after, that he might know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death †. Is it not virtue in soldiers, and a brave ambition to follow their general and imitate his valour, his magnanimity, and contempt of dangers? And shall not christians strive to be like their head, their leader, the great captain of their salvation? *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously ‡.*

\* Luke 23. 26.  
of this epistle.

† Phil. 3. 10.

‡ Ch. 2. v. 23.

4thly. This also, one would think, might be of some weight, to make you bear sufferings with patience and joy, which is added in the same verse, *That when the glory of Christ shall be revealed, you shall be glad also with exceeding joy.*

Whether we understand the revealing of Christ's glory, of some more glorious gospel light, and liberty, and power yet to come; or of his coming in glory to judge the world in the last great day of it; we are told, that all his faithful followers shall then be filled with a great and surprizing joy, a pure unmixed joy, and that a suitable behaviour under sufferings now, will greatly promote and advance that joy.

If you are now ashamed of Jesus, or of his ways, or of his worship, or of his people, or of his cross; or if you refuse to submit to those trials he may throw into your lot, but you grow angry and sullen, and are disposed to quarrel with his providence, or with the instruments of it, and lose your patience and the peace of your minds, you will have great reason to blush and be ashamed, when Jesus shall come again in glory to reward every one according to their works.

But if, on the contrary, you own Jesus for your Lord, walk in his ways, keep close to his pure institutions, and join yourselves to his people, and take up his cross and follow him to whatever services or sufferings he shall lead you;



you ; if instead of murmuring at, or being ashamed of, sufferings for his name's sake, you are patient under them, and glory in them, there will come a day, when Jesus shall come again with power and majesty to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe in him, and when you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And will not this be a sufficient recompence for any present sorrow or heaviness that may come upon you, thro' divers temptations? Will not the prospect of that great day's approach, and the joy, and the glory of it, bear you up under, and make you set light by, any dishonourable marks of distinction, any reproaches or injuries thrown upon you by men? Let this argument have its due weight with you, and, I am persuaded, it will excite you to a becoming behaviour under sufferings.

5thly. If you are reproached for the name of Christ you are happy in that the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you \*. The Spirit of glory and of God ; *i. e.* the glorious Spirit of God, (according to the *Syriack*) which is given to good men, to bear them up under sufferings, and carry them thro' with patience, faith, and an holy courage ; and is not only glorious in himself, but puts a glory upon those he dwells with, causing them to shine before men, by a course of virtuous

\* Ver. 14.

and holy actions, and conducting them to future glory and happiness.

If therefore you are patient under sufferings, and rejoice in them, you will not only make it appear, that you are acted and influenced by the divine Spirit; but will by that means also engage his stay with you. He is a Spirit of love, and peace, and joy, but is displeased with anger, wrath, and malice, and the other boistrous passions. The fruits which he brings forth in men's hearts and lives, being goodness, righteousness and truth \*.

There is a becoming beauty and glory in the faith, the meekness, the patience and charity, and the other graces of the christian. A religious life carries a lustre with it, such as has sometimes remarkably over-aw'd the rude designs of ungodly men, and has restrained them from committing their intended wickedness in the presence of such as have been strictly virtuous and pious. Our apostle † exhorts the christian women of his day, to be adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. The several graces of meekness, patience and love, which the Spirit of God works where he dwells, will be a greater honour, and ornament, and glory to you, than any honours you may now court, or men can confer.

\* Eph. 5. 9.

† Ch. 3. 4.

Whilst others therefore are seeking places of profit and honour, do you endeavour after a christian temper and spirit, which will be your greatest glory; ornaments far excelling the scarlet gown, or chain of gold, and all the other regalia, and ensigns of power and authority, belonging to magistrates or sovereign princes.

*6thly.* The same verse mentions another reason, why christians should bear their sufferings with patience, and behave well under them; because the Spirit of God is hereby glorified. At the 16th verse he commends it to the suffering christian as his duty, That he glorify God on this behalf. Here, at the 14th verse, he maketh use of this as a motive, to enforce a patient submission to sufferings, that the Spirit of God is hereby glorified. He it is that your enemies speak evil of, when they reproach you for following his sacred suggestions, and speaking to you by your consciences; when they speak evil of that way of his in which you walk, and when they reproach and persecute you who are his living temples, and deride those hopes, and joys, and strong consolations, which he giveth to those that obey him.

But when you bear up under all your sufferings, thro' his divine supports, when you are taught by his sacred influences, to rejoice in them, when you bring forth the fruits of  
meek-



meekness, patience, righteousness and love, under all your difficulties and oppressions, and when you are assisted and encouraged by them to wait for your rewards and honours, till after death, you hereby not only give proof of your being under an higher influence than that of your own spirits, but you honour and bring glory to that holy Spirit that dwelleth in you, and directs and governs all your religious motions. His grace becomes visible in you, in the noble and excellent fruits and effects which it brings forth; effects suitable to a divine author, and worthy of the Spirit of God. *For that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit* \*. *And they who are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh* †; they seek and pursue only sensual pleasures, or worldly honours and wealth: but they who are after the Spirit, *i. e.* acted and influenc'd by the Spirit of God, mind the things of the Spirit; are spiritual and heavenly in their desires, in their aims, and ends, and pursuits, and plainly discover, that all their works are wrought in God, and inspired by the divinity. Therefore by the exercise of patience, meekness, faith and love, and the other graces that adorn the christian, you may more glorify God, advance the honour of the Saviour, and please the Holy Spirit, than by any designed

\* John 3. 6.

† Rom. 8. 5.

services in any high posts of honour, were you exalted to them.

7thly. Another argument may be taken from the 17th verse, which may be thus read; *the time is coming when judgment may begin at the house of God.* By judgment, understand some severe afflictions designed for the trial of God's people, and which were coming upon them. And he intimates in the next verse, that the trial would be so great, that none but sincere and upright persons would be able to stand them, and that even they could not persevere without great difficulty.

My brethren, you labour under some burdens and difficulties at present; and complain, perhaps too loudly, of wrongs and injuries. If you do not bear your injuries with patience, but dishonour your profession by impatient clamours and unruly passions, God may bring other severer judgments upon you for your trial, when you may not have those opportunities for the manifesting your moderation, meekness and charity, that now you have; and when there may be a great many more snares and offences cast in your way, and such as may make the work of your salvation much more difficult and dangerous than now it is.

Your fathers suffered much greater trials, such as fines, the confiscation of their goods,  
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and imprisonment for their nonconformity. And are you worthy of the honour of being descended from them, if you are impatient and murmuring under much lesser burdens? You say these burdens are unjustly laid upon you by men, and therefore think you have a right to complain. But is not the hand of God in this dispensation? Is it not by his permission that all this is laid upon you? And will you dare to say that your sufferings, as coming from his hand, are undeserved and unrighteous? If therefore you refuse or neglect to make a proper use of present trials; you may justly look for some severer dispensation and judgment to begin with you, to try you more thoroughly until it have purged away all your dross, and brought you to such a meek, humble, suffering temper of mind, as the gospel requires, and recommends to all that profess it. And pray remember it, those judgments will lie much heavier upon you, which you bring upon yourselves by your own criminal conduct.

8thly. The last verse affords another reason for a patient submission to afflictive trials in general, and for the committing your souls to God's keeping in particular, *viz. Because he is a faithful Creator.* As your great Creator, he knows your frame, your weaknesses, temptations and discouragements; he knows the malice and subtlety of your great enemy, and  
knows



knows how to furnish you with suitable supports. And as a faithful God he will be just and true to his promises, and lay no more upon you than he will enable you to bear, but will with every temptation and in every trial find out a way for your escaping. If you cast yourselves upon him he will sustain you ; will make all your trials work for good ; produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness at present, and to work out for you hereafter, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

To conclude, **THE DISPUTE IS NOW FINALLY ADJUSTED**, the providence of God hath determined, that this is not the proper time for the taking off your fetters, and enlarging your liberties. And altho this be no excuse, no lessening of the guilt of those that continue your oppressions, yet it should be a reason with you, patiently to submit and acquiesce in the divine determination. The God whom you serve, is pleased you should yet bear your testimony to his truth, and to his cause, in the face of reproaches and opposition. And he has wise designs to serve by your present trials ; when they have answered the end of his holy and wise providence they shall be removed. But until you are brought to an humble suffering temper of mind, and are in some good measure mortified to the world, to the profits, pleasures and honours of it ; such enlarged liberty  
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and preferments, would be snares, and might endanger your salvation. When you are prepared by meekness, self-denial, and humility for worldly honours and advantages, you shall, by the over-ruling providence of God, be advanced to them. And if you hope for such a season to come, it may, perhaps, be better to solicit God than men. He has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them as he pleaseth; and if your ways please him, he can make your enemies to be at peace with you. He who hath the residue of the Spirit, can enlighten men to see the justness and equity of your claim, and the dishonour the Redeemer's cause suffers by those things you complain of, and wish to have removed. In the mean time shew that you are Christians, that you have learnt of your great Lord, to be meek and patient, and especially to forgive and pray for those that injure and oppress you. And join heartily with them in whatever may be for the nation's good, and so may you both hope and quietly wait for God's salvation.



**F I N I S.**

